

Washington, DC – Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-2) announced that the U.S. House of Representatives approved by a vote of 417 to 1 legislation to prevent the scheduled 21% reduction in Medicare physician payments through November 30, 2010, and makes the prevention retroactive to June 1, 2010. The U.S. Senate passed this measure by voice vote last Friday. Congressman Bishop supported the legislation, which is entitled “Senate Amendments to HR 3962, Preservation of Access to Care for Medicare Beneficiaries & Pension Relief Act.”

“These cuts would have adversely impacted the access to health care of millions of senior citizens across the nation,” said Congressman Bishop. “Congress still needs to work towards a permanent solution to prevent any further uncertainty for patients and physicians.”

The 1997 Balanced Budget Act implemented the current system used to determine physician reimbursements under Medicare Part B, which is known as the “Sustainable Growth Rate” (or SGR). A cost-control measure, the SGR sets a target each year for Medicare expenditure on physician services based on growth in the gross domestic product (GDP). If expenditures exceed the target, Medicare attempts to recoup the money by cutting physician reimbursement. The SGR has triggered such cuts every year since 2002, but Congress has prevented them from taking effect. Congressman Bishop has consistently supported legislation to block the physician payment cuts as well as to strengthen Medicare for current and future senior citizens.

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